



Testimony in Support of SB 753
An Act Concerning the Counting of Incarcerated Persons for the Purpose of Determining
Legislative Districts

Dear Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Theo Haaks and I am a resident of New Haven testifying to communicate my strong support for Connecticut SB 753, *An Act Concerning the Counting of Incarcerated Persons for the Purpose of Determining Legislative Districts*.

The 2020 general election was my first time voting. Since then, I have been increasingly aware of my political voice and the systems in place which may diminish its full resonance. Upon discovering that in Connecticut, incarcerated persons are counted in the legislative districts where they are incarcerated, I became extremely concerned about the implications that this practice has for diluting the relative democratic power of non prison holding districts.

Stopping the practice of counting incarcerated people as residents of the districts in which their correctional facilities are located is imperative to increasing the representativeness of Connecticut's General Assembly. The counting of incarcerated persons, the vast majority of whom cannot vote, as members of the legislative districts in which their carceral facilities are located affords inappropriate electoral power to said districts. Moreover, incarcerated persons who can vote must do so in the districts where they lived prior to incarceration. The status quo inaccurately invests legislative authority and exacerbates racial inequities in government, given that Connecticut districts housing correctional facilities have a far higher proportion of white voters than compared to local incarcerated populations.

In 2010, both New York and Maryland initiated legislation against prison gerrymandering. Maryland's No Representation without Population Act, H.B. 496.3 and New York's "Part XX" both created provisions to geocode the former residential location of eligible individuals and reallocate the population data back to their home districts. This cause is gaining prominence as Washington, Delaware, Nevada, and California have all passed similar legislation to end the

practice of prison gerrymandering. I implore the Connecticut General Assembly to ride this wave of political momentum towards establishing a more just democracy in our state.

Every Connecticutter deserves equal representation in the state legislature. I ask the committee to consider passing S.B. 753 to enshrine that same principle in law.

Sincerely,

Theo Haaks
New Haven, CT